IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-16 (Cancelled)

17. (Currently Amended) A method for managing specimen data reporting among specimen collection facilities, said method comprising:

receiving a specimen report from a client terminal, wherein the specimen report comprises a specimen description including specimen image data; [[and]]

processing the specimen report in accordance with a facility identifier corresponding to the specimen collection facility at which the client terminal is located, said processing including storing the specimen description in association with the facility identifier in a network accessible data storage device;

storing specimen handling data that specifies specimen handling capabilities of multiple specimen collection facilities;

determining a correlation between the specimen image data and specimen handling capability data; and

selecting one or more of the multiple specimen collection facilities to send the specimen report in accordance with said determined correlation.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein said storing the specimen description in association with the facility identifier comprises copying the specimen description data into one or more file directories having directory names corresponding to the facility identifier.

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein said storing the specimen description in association with the facility identifier comprises associating the specimen description with the facility identifier in one or more database records.

21. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the specimen image data is contained in one or more digital image files, said copying the specimen description into one or more file directories further comprising copying the one or more digital image files into a digital image library directory, the digital image library directory having a directory name corresponding to the facility identifier.

22. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the received specimen report further includes a priority level indicator selected from among priority level indicia representing levels of urgency associated with the specimen report, said method further comprising processing the received specimen report in accordance with the priority level indicator, said processing the received specimen report in accordance with the priority level indicator comprising triggering a user alert signal in accordance with the level of urgency represented by the priority level indicator included with the received specimen report.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Original) The method of Claim 22, wherein said processing the received specimen report in accordance with the priority level indicator comprises storing the specimen report in association with the priority level indicator in a network accessible data storage device.

25. (Cancelled)

26. (Cancelled)

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[26]] 17, further comprising:
    determining an epidemiological threat level in accordance with the specimen description; and
    assigning [[the]] a priority level designation to the received specimen report in accordance with the determined epidemiological threat level.

28. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[26]] 27, farther comprising delivering an alert message to at least one other specimen collection facility, wherein the alert message includes the specimen description associated with the facility identifier and the priority level designation.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28, further comprising, responsive to said delivering an alert message to at least one other specimen collection facility, storing an alert message status record.

30. (Currently Amended) A system for managing specimen data reporting among specimen collection facilities, said system comprising:

means for receiving a specimen report from a client terminal, wherein the specimen report comprises a specimen description including specimen image data; [[and]]

processing means for processing the specimen report in accordance with a facility identifier corresponding to the specimen collection facility at which the client terminal is located, said processing including storing the specimen description in association with the facility identifier in a network accessible data storage device;

means for storing specimen handling data that specifies specimen handling capabilities of multiple specimen collection facilities;

means for determining a correlation between the specimen image data and specimen handling capability data; and

means for selecting one or more of the multiple specimen collection facilities to send the specimen report in accordance with said determined correlation.

31. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 30, wherein said processing means for processing the specimen report in accordance with a facility identifier comprises means for copying the specimen description ~~data~~ into one or more file directories having directory names corresponding to the facility identifier.

32. (Cancelled)

33. (Cancelled)

34. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein the specimen image data is contained in one or more digital image files, said means for copying the specimen description into one or more file directories further comprising means for copying the one or more digital image files into a digital image library directory, the digital image library directory having a directory name corresponding to the facility identifier.

35. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 30, wherein the received specimen report further includes a priority level indicator, said system further comprising means for processing the received specimen report in accordance with the priority level indicator, wherein said means for processing the received specimen report in accordance with the priority level indicator comprises means for storing the specimen report in association with the priority level indicator in a network accessible data storage device.

36. (Cancelled)

37. (Currently Amended) The system of claim [[36]] 35, wherein said means for storing the specimen report in association with the priority level indicator comprises means for associating the priority level indicator with the specimen report in one or more database records.

38. (Cancelled)

39. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 38, further comprising:

means for determining an epidemiological threat level in accordance with the specimen description; and

means for assigning [[the]] a priority level designation to the received specimen report in accordance with the determined epidemiological threat level.

40. (Currently Amended) The system of claim [[38]] 39, further comprising means for delivering an alert message to at least one other specimen collection facility, wherein the alert message includes the specimen description associated with the facility identifier and the priority level designation.

41. (Original) The system of claim 40, further comprising means responsive to said delivering an alert message to at least one other specimen collection facility, for storing an alert message status record.

Claims 42-45 (Cancelled)

46. (New) The method of claim 17, wherein said determining a correlation is performed using a rule-based algorithm, an inference engine, or a neural network.

47. (New) The system of claim 30, wherein said means for determining a correlation comprises a rule-based algorithm, an inference engine, or a neural network.